

## COLLECTING SHELLS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

BY WALTER J. EYERDAM

Now that the Solomons are in the news every day and we are all vitally interested in what is going on down there, a few notes on my shell collecting activities on these islands, when I was collecting birds as a member of the Whitney South Sea Expedition in 1929-30, may be of interest.

When I saw in the newspapers the pictures of the landing made by the first contingent of marines on Guadalcanal Island, I recognized right away the beach near Berandi, where our expedition stopped for a day at the plantation of Mr. Robertson, to pick up Gordon White, the assistant of Dr. S. M. Lambert, chief of the Rockefeller Foundation anti-disease campaign in the South Seas. We were bound for Rennell Island, a hitherto unexplored and unspoiled paradise or "Lost world" of healthy and beautiful savages.

The long cobblestone beach at Berandi looked very unpromising for shells, since the heavy winds rolled the breakers high and washed the round stones to and fro. On sandy stretches, I had better luck and collected 54 species of marines in about an hour, including a dozen that were new to me. Some of the species of cones had remarkably heavy shells, as a protection that nature had given against buffeting on the stony beach.

Jack London wrote "The Cruise of the Snark," which told much about the Solomons, especially in places I have since visited and collected biological material. Martin Johnson accompanied him on the Snark. I did not know that London had written another very interesting book about Guadalcanal, until I found "Die Insel Berandi" in an old bookstore in Saarbrücken in 1931, and read it eagerly. A few days afterwards, I spent three days as the guest of Dr. Eugene Paravicini, director of the Museum of Ethnography, in Basle, Switzerland, and had time to see most of his immense collection of ethnographic and anthropologic material, which he collected in the Solomons.

It seems that London's book "The Island of Berandi" was founded on fact. The heroine, an adventurous young American girl was shipwrecked on Guadalcanal in her father's yacht. With her American fiancé and a faithful attendant, a fine big Polynesian

whom the natives called "one fellow Adam-Adam" and who had saved the lives of the two Americans, a plantation was started at Berandi. The fiancé died of fever and the girl married the Polynesian. Wild and tough Malaita bushmen were imported as indentured laborers and disciplined with the aid of lash and gun. Jack London got his story directly from the shipwrecked American woman.

In 1928, when Dr. Paravicini stopped at that plantation, he met a good-looking young woman, armed with a gun and a heavy whip, bossing a gang of Malaita men. She invited him to dinner, and soon appeared dressed as a lady in up-to-date European style. She managed the place alone and handled the crew of tough Malaita men, who worked well for her. This girl seems to have been the daughter of London's heroine, who with the Polynesian father had died some years before and left her to manage the estate.

Dr. Paravicini found 2 new subspecies of *Papuina* and 3 new species and 5 new subspecies of *Placostylus* in the Solomons; these were described by Dr. Rensch. I found 2 new species and 2 new subspecies of *Papuina* and 4 new species and 1 subspecies of *Placostylus*, which were described by Wm. J. Clench.

After the war, if conditions permit, a great deal of work in the line of biological explorations in the Solomons awaits accomplishment. The birds and the butterflies have been quite well studied, but the botany and the land snails of the mountainous interior are still but little known.

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## ABUNDANCE-AREAS OF *MESODON PENNSYLVANICUS* (GREEN)

By GLENN R. WEBB

During approximately six years of casual collecting in eastern Marion County (Warren Township), Indiana, it has become evident that the land snail *Mesodon pennsylvanicus* (Green) exhibits extreme variations in abundance in this area—it being rare<sup>1</sup> in most localities but abundant at a few. It is the purpose of this

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<sup>1</sup> One finds less than one *pennsylvanicus* to 25 specimens of other Polygyrids, hence, an estimated abundance-ratio of 1/25.